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SUBJECT: Update on Plans to Deport Liberian Detainees

Ref: Accra 380

¶1. (SBU) Following up on reftel discussions concerning the possible deportation of Liberian residents of the Buduburam refugee camp, Ambassador Bridgewater spoke March 20 with Interior Minister Kwamena Bartels. Bartels said that after consultations with UNHCR and the Liberian Government, Ghana is now planning to return tomorrow (March 21) to Liberia 40 of the detainees who had been arrested for violating the Public Order Law.

¶2. (SBU) Bartels said these 40 detainees were not documented as refugees and were "hanging around" Buduburam. He said that the GOG was coordinating this with UNHCR, and when asked whether UNHCR was in agreement with their deportation, Bartels replied that these "people were of no concern to UNHCR." When asked by the Ambassador whether the GOG was ensuring that the deportations did not result in the separation of parents and children, Bartels replied that families were being reunited and sent back to Buduburam.

¶3. (SBU) Bartels also confirmed that the Ghanaian and Liberian Foreign Ministers would meet on Tuesday, March 25.

¶4. (SBU) In a separate conversation March 20, the Liberian Ambassador to Ghana confirmed to Ambassador Bridgewater that the GOG will deport 40 Buduburam residents who are not documented as refugees and who were causing mayhem at the camp. He also noted that the Presidents of Ghana and Liberia had spoken and agreed that something must be done with those who had broken the law.

¶5. (SBU) Finally, Accra Refugee Coordinator Office (RCO) spoke March 20 with UNHCR's Accra office, who confirmed that they are engaged in ongoing discussions with the GOG regarding a way forward for the detainees. UNHCR has also informed us that they are involved with the screening process, have gained access to the detainees, are ensuring that they are receiving proper care and treatment, and are ensuring that measures are in place to protect children and families from separation. UNHCR Coordinator is scheduled to meet with Ambassador Bridgewater at 1500 local March 30 to provide latest briefing.

BRIDGEWATER